

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 07/07/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Sciences and Engineering
- **Department:** Department of Computer Science
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1 – BSc in Computer Science

In Greek:

Πληροφορική (4 χρόνια, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

In English:

Computer Science (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor (BSc))

Programme 2 – PhD in Computer Science

In Greek:

Πληροφορική (3 χρόνια, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

In English:

Computer Science (3 years, 180 ECTS, PhD in Computer Science)

Language(s) of instruction: English

- **Department's Status:** Currently Operating



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [[L.136\(I\)/2015](#) – [L.132\(I\)/2021](#)].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

0. Introduction

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the on-site evaluation of the Department of Computer Science and two of its programs: BSc in Computer Science and PhD in Computer Science on June 26 2025. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. During the visit, the EEC met the faculty supporting the programme, and had separate meetings with students and alumni of the programme from the Nicosia campus, as well as external stakeholders that are members of the Department of Computer Science advisory board.

We would like to also thank the EEC for their **extremely positive** evaluation of the Department where **14 out of 16 quality indicators received the top rating of “Compliant”** (amongst the choices of compliant, partially compliant, non-compliant) and 2 indicators receiving the rating of “Partially-Compliant”. We would like to note that 69 out of the 95 (applicable) quality standards/indicators received a perfect score of 5 out of 5, resulting an **overall average score is 4.71 out of 5**.

More specifically, the EEC states, amongst other:

- *“The Department is successful, in as much as that it produces science of a high quality, publishes in good conferences and journals, is able to attract competitive research funding, and that the programmes it delivers which the EEC was tasked to evaluate, produces highly employable graduates.”*
- *“The EEC has a positive impression about the Department: an efficient and dynamic Head, a group of strongly motivated and dynamic faculty members with a healthy seniority pyramid, and an appetite for facing the challenges that lie ahead.”*
- *“Specifically for the BSc in Computer Science, for which the EEC submitted a report as part of the UNIC-Athens visit on May 31, 2025, the EEC notes that the programme was updated as it recommended: new courses were introduced, other courses repositioned, as part of an effort to update the programme. The EEC fully approves of these updates to the programme — and appreciated the long and detailed discussions during the onsite visit of the individual courses.”*
- *“The department is efficiently and competently run by its Head, who impressed the EEC by her ability to produce constructive and comprehensive responses to the previous EEC report from the onsite visit to UNIC-Athens just one month prior to this site visit.”*
- *“The EEC also finds that the Doctoral programme produces graduates with comparable qualities to elsewhere in Europe — graduates who are satisfied with their experiences as PhD students at the Department.”*



We do appreciate the committee's recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our Department and its programs and we will be addressing those in the corresponding section of this response.

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning
- 1.2 Connecting with society
- 1.3 Development processes

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *"The teaching faculty in the Department are energetic, dedicated, enthusiastic, and committed"*
- *"The Department is well run by a group of dedicated faculty members, administered by strong and competent leadership of the Head of Department."*
- *"By way of its outreach activities targeting high-schools, the Department is making active efforts at attracting future students to its Degree programmes."*
- *"The website of the Department is clear and informative about its activities (in both research and teaching)."*
- *"The EEC appreciates that the Department has several senior associate and full professors ensuring intellectual leadership, and is particularly encouraged to see that it manages to attract and promote female faculty members."*
- *"The EEC was particularly impressed by the leadership of the Head of Department in general, by the transparency in making information available, and by her agility in responding to the findings and recommendations of the EEC report evaluating the UNIC-Athens extension of the Department some of which were relevant to the UNIC-Nicosia programme."*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

1. 1 *"While the EEC appreciates that the Department has several senior associate and full professors ensuring intellectual leadership, and is particularly encouraged to see that it manages to attract and promote female faculty members, it strongly encourages that recruitments / promotions into positions at UNIC-Nicosia maintains that trajectory towards gender balance."*

Response/Action:

As the EEC acknowledged, the Department already has several female professors at the top academic ranks who also hold leadership positions in the Department (Head, Associate Head,

Program Coordinator). The Department is committed in maintaining this trajectory towards gender balance with the UNIC-Nicosia recruitments/promotions.

1.2 *“The Department mission statement is somewhat generic — thus, difficult to disagree with, but also impossible to measure the Department performance against. The EEC would recommend that the department collectively reflects on a more specific, ambitious, and quantifiable strategic vision for the next 5+ years. This could, for example, include ambitions of increasing visibility through organising a major international conference on one of the campuses ; of ensuring that at least 30% of the faculty members spend a semester on sabbatical abroad over the next 5 years, so as to widen your international academic network ; of establishing an “industrial PhD programme” to increase joint academic/industrial research; or ensuring that 20% of your BSc-graduates participate in research as evidenced by joint authorship with faculty. The EEC insists that this list of suggestions is not prescriptive, but intended to inspire reflections among the colleagues within the Department on “where you want to be in 5 years time”?”*

Response/Action:

We would like to respectfully note that the Department’s strategic vision was included in the documentation submitted for review, and may not have been fully considered in this comment. More specifically, the Department indeed has a strategic vision and has clearly outlined the strategic planning methodology for the design of the 2025-2030 strategic plan given in Section D.2 of the “Application For Departmental Evaluation” form (200.3). More specifically the table given in D.2 outlines the Department’s strategic goals. These goals are divided into three main pillars: Pillar I: Education, Pillar II: Research an Impact, Pillar III: Governance and Organization. Along with the strategic goals, the table depicts success factors for each pillar and high-level initiatives that will be adopted by the Department in order to achieve the outlined strategic goals. In addition to this extensive table of strategic pillars in section D.2 of the submitted form, the Department also added KPIs (using the S.M.A.R.T. methodology) which outline measurable objectives and clear actions, ensuring continuous development in the areas of student-centered education, impactful research, societal engagement, global reach, faculty and staff advancement, and effective resource allocation. The baseline and target values, combined with assigned responsibilities and timelines, facilitate structured planning and regular performance evaluation. These KPIs are shown in section E. 3 of the “Application For Departmental Evaluation” form.

1.3 *“The EEC believes that the Department, in view of its undeniable qualities, has a strong unexploited potential in terms of PhD student recruitment. While recruiting PhD students is always a delicate process, and while the EEC does not claim to have a magic recipe, it does recommend that rather than fatally accept the situation, the Department should develop a multi-pronged and multi-year strategy, better marketing the doctoral programme both internally and externally. The EEC respectfully provides the following — non-prescriptive — suggestions as inspiration for the department when constructing such a strategy:*

- *Changing the messaging towards BSc and MSc students regarding what the “life of a PhD student” with the ambition to — over years — increase the conversion rate of Bachelors-to-PhD students inside UNIC.*

The current understanding among the students seems to be that it is “write an endless stream of papers, for low pay” — whereas a better, and more accurate, messaging would be “work on a really cool topic for 3 years, without a boss/client breathing down your neck. And with really smart and cool people, while even getting paid for it”.

It is likely that the current understanding is due to BSc students simply never having been proactively informed about what a PhD entails.”

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC suggestions to enhance the PhD program’s recruiting efforts. This EEC comment, as well as the remaining bulleted comments in the section below, all refer to the PhD Computer Science program. All these comments/suggestions are fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response points 1.1-1.8, which is submitted with the Departmental response. Starting with the above comment which is addressed in programmatic PhD, point 1.1.

1.3a *“Exposing BSc and MSc students to research earlier. For example, through:*

- *Inviting them to the departmental “Research Days”, relevant seminar series, engage high-achieving students in presenting their theses, industry lab internship outcomes.*
- *Offering BSc/MSc final-year-projects that are related to research projects, in which PhD students are involved and naturally can be engaged in co-supervision of the student project.*
- *Allowing BSc students to do their “industry placement” (COMP-492) as a “research lab placement”, encouraging students to get a taste of research. Consider introducing a choice between internal research lab and external academic or industry lab internships.*
- *Consider broader and more systematic engagement of relevant industry in branding and defining the image and essence of the PhD program.”*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.2, submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3b *“Engaging with external stakeholders and making strategic agreements on branding and defining the image and essence of the department's PhD program.*

- *Consider broader and more systematic engagement of relevant industry. During the meeting, EEC heard concrete and enthusiastic suggestions from the department's academic and industry partners on how to make the PhD positions more attractive.*
- *Involve industrial partners to make the industrial value of the PhD known.*
- *Consider defining joint co-funded PhD projects, industry lab internships for PhDs, joint research events etc.*
- *Organise regular seminars with representatives from industry, who themselves have a PhD, to illustrate the value of this degree in a multitude of different careers.*

- *Consider making an agreement with Meta, Google Brain and other connections at top industry labs such they can commit to mentor 1 PhD per year and potentially to offer an internship as a follow up.”*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.3, submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3c *“Conducting market research, developing a strategy on attracting talented international PhDs and making an investment plan to support it, e.g., as simple as offering a possibility for the 1st year PhD students to attend a top conference or summer school even if they did not get publishable results yet.”*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.4, submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3d *“Solicit the academic support services for assistance and inspiration. The EEC asked, during the site visit with the administrative personnel, if they had any ideas, and spontaneously the head librarian suggested that as the library has copies of all PhD theses, perhaps she could help create better visibility for those — to make the PhD programmes more well known. Similarly, the ERASMUS office has an impressive network, that perhaps can be solicited when sharing open PhD positions.”*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.5, submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3e *“The EEC notes that elsewhere in Europe, most PhD-students undertake their PhD fresh out of their BSc/MSc. Further, in many places in Europe, a PhD is a full-time occupation and PhD students are either salaried, or they have a stipend allowing them to not seek paid work in parallel to their PhD. The advantage of targeting students fresh out of their BSs/MSc is, that they are typically younger — and, thus, also generally more adventurous, interested in and able to move for their PhD (no family ties, no mortgage, no small children, ...) “*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.6, submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3f *“In view of that a considerable amount of the department funding is through EU projects, and given that in other EU countries, EU projects are able to provide PhD student salaries/stipends aligned with the local national market, the EEC encourages that the Department investigates such opportunities. The advantage of offering a PhD with a living salary/stipend is, that it makes it easier for foreign students to project*

themselves into a new country: no dependency on family support, no requirements to fend for a student-job, etc.”

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.7 submitted with the Departmental response.

1.3g *“Consider funding Teaching Assistant positions for PhD students to support teaching staff in delivering their courses, and involve them in their research. “*

Response/Action:

This comment is fully addressed in the PhD programmatic response point 1.8, submitted with the Departmental response.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

- 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy**
- 2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study**

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The EEC finds the commitment to teaching proficiency evidenced by the faculty on-boarding programme for incoming faculty members commendable.”*
- *“The Head of the Department of Computer Science and others in leadership roles such as Degree Co-ordinators are female — which is commendable as role models for gender balance in STEM subjects.”*
- *“During our conversations with stakeholders, the EEC was reassured that the QA policy of the department, in terms of grade fairness and predictability of student outcomes, is effective. The EEC is reassured that the policy ensured no reported incidents of intolerance, or bullying against students or staff.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

2.1 *“The EEC notes that while an ad-hoc curriculum change process over email may be passable in a small and tightly-knit department, it has both scalability and tractability issues. As the Department is creating an extension at UNIC-Athens that will be delivering the same programmes, a formalisation of the curriculum change processes is recommended. The EEC notes that rather than being an ad-hoc process, curriculum updates be done at regular and scheduled intervals (for example: at the end of a semester) for programs that need it, and be done in a more formal process through submission of a written proposal by the course leader, for approval by a given date. The EEC further recommends that mechanisms be put in place to record curriculum updates and ensure that all courses be examined and reviewed regularly. The EEC suggests that this, for example, can be through formalising feedback to all courses by stakeholders (graduates, students, industrial partners, faculty members) by soliciting at least every 3 years on a rolling schedule. The EEC notes that it made these comments when evaluating the UNIC-Athens extension of the Department, and that the Department during the site-visit confirmed that it had taken steps towards this — and recommends continuing refining this process, as it gets experience with running it.”*

Response/Action:

We would like to clarify a possible misunderstanding regarding the Department's curriculum change process, particularly the reference to it being conducted "over email". While email may occasionally be used for coordination or communication purposes, the actual process is formal and structured. The curriculum changes presented in the recent visit were initiated and reviewed by a Curriculum Committee, approved by the Department Council, and composed of both faculty and student representatives. The committee held scheduled meetings, with decisions recorded in formal minutes. These were then presented to the Advisory Board for further feedback and suggested changes. The final changes were discussed and approved by the Department Council and the School Council.

That said, we fully acknowledge the EEC's recommendation regarding formalisation and systematisation, particularly in the context of our expansion to UNIC-Athens. The Department is committed in following the University's Internal Programme Evaluation Process (IPEP) as outlined in the Internal Regulations, Chapter Three: Policies For Programmes Of Study.

2.3 *"The EEC suggests that it would increase fairness and further reduce potential biases, if exams and assignments were anonymised, and/or graded by a 2nd grader."*

Response/Action:

The Department follows the University exam regulations where the examinations are not anonymised. Although we do appreciate the EEC's recommendation as a contribution to fairness, some assessment formats in our courses are inherently personal or interactive, making anonymization impossible (for example: presentations, class participations, quizzes and labs). Although utilizing a 2nd grader would be impractical to utilize for all courses, we do utilize 3 graders in the Final Year Project courses, which are 2 courses (12 ECTS) in the final year of studies. These projects are presented in a 3-member committee consisting of the project supervisor and another 2 examiners. It should also be noted, that the University already has an established petition policy that enables students to request a second, blind grading of any exam or assessment. This policy provides an additional layer of fairness and transparency, ensuring that concerns about grading bias or errors can be formally addressed through a structured review process.

3. Administration

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The Department is run in a collegiate fashion and works as a cohesive unit.”*
- *“The Department has a petition system in place for students who wish their performance in examinations to be reviewed within one month of the release of the marks. Students have access to their scripts and can discuss the marking decisions with their instructors.”*
- *“The Department has a well-defined procedure in place for dealing with plagiarism with the involvement of the Head of department in serious cases.”*
- *“Support is provided for international matters such as Erasmus mobility programmes and recruitment of overseas students.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

3.1 *“Whereas it is a virtue that academic matters are deliberated in open meetings, it could also result in decisions being stalled due to lack of agreement. For example, the introduction of Machine Learning as a compulsory course in the early years of the BSc in CS has been debated but a decision to implement this move had been postponed (Though the EEC is content to see that it, following its recommendations from the UNIC-Athens evaluation, has finally been introduced in that programme). On occasion the department needs to be decisive in reaching decisions promptly based on academic merit, especially when the Department is distributed in different locations — as will be the case soon.”*

Response/Action:

The Department values its collegial and inclusive approach to academic governance, where curriculum changes and strategic decisions are discussed transparently among faculty and student representatives. This inclusive process ensures broad support and alignment, particularly for impactful decisions such as introducing compulsory courses in the early years of the programme.

We appreciate the EEC’s observation regarding the balance between open academic deliberation and the need for timely decision-making. The debate regarding the introduction of Machine Learning as a compulsory early-year course reflects both the importance of the topic and the need to align with the structure of the overall curriculum without redundancy, given that a significant number of ML courses already exist at later stages, as specialized major electives. That said, we recognise that in some situations — especially with the Department now operating across multiple locations — delays in decision-making can become a challenge. To address this, the Department will consider ways to improve efficiency, such as setting clearer timelines for academic decisions and ensuring structured follow-up when consensus is

not quickly reached. This will help preserve the inclusive nature of our processes while ensuring that critical decisions are made in a timely and effective manner.

3.2 *“The Department should consider appointing a Departmental Academic Misconduct Officer who will review issues of academic misconduct such as plagiarism and free the Head to concentrate on strategic decisions.”*

Response/Action:

We agree with the EEC’s recommendation regarding the appointment of a Department Academic Misconduct Officer. Until now, the respective Programme Coordinators have acted as the first point of contact for such cases. While this approach has worked well in a smaller departmental setting, we recognise the value of greater consistency as the Department grows. To that end, we will appoint a Departmental Academic Misconduct Officer to serve as the central point of contact for all cases. This will help ensure that incidents are handled in a more uniform manner across programmes, and it will also allow the Head of Department to focus more fully on strategic planning and leadership.

3.3 *“The Department should consider marketing their courses more widely to attract overseas students from Europe, Middle East and Africa to augment student numbers on the course.”*

Response/Action:

The Computer Science Department is working closely with the University’s Marketing Department, which, in collaboration with the Recruitment Unit, are actively promoting our programmes abroad. This strategy has been working effectively, as demonstrated by the strong international representation in our student body at the Nicosia campus — with 38% of students in the last academic year coming from non-Cypriot and non-Greek backgrounds.

That said, we agree that there is further potential to expand our international reach, especially with the opening of the Athens campus. The Department will continue working with the University’s central teams to explore targeted outreach efforts across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, including through strategic partnerships, showcasing alumni success, and highlighting our strengths in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, IoT and Cybersecurity.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“Students appreciate receiving timely elaborate feedback on their work.”*
- *“Students appreciate availability of teaching staff for face-to-face meetings.”*
- *“The Department has been reactive to feedback received from the EEC when evaluating the extension of the Department at UNIC-Athens, and has been agile in introducing both curriculum updates, and additional processes.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

None reported.

5. Teaching Staff

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- “The Department is currently composed of fourteen full-time faculty members, with an adequate seniority distribution, several full professors covering the different expertise areas.”
- “The current faculty members are active researchers in their fields. They conduct application-inspired research aiming to make societal impact. They contribute to Open Science, e.g., by publishing open datasets that can foster research development on societally important topics, notably, in healthcare. “
- “There are indicators of a very good faculty–student engagement within the Department”
- “There are indicators of a very good engagement between Alumni and the Department.”
- “Faculty members are well-informed about quality assurance aspects including individual course improvement, and with how to deal with potential misconduct of students.”
- “Faculty members is well-informed about the student safety aspects.”
- “The Department provides mentorship for new hires, and informs them about expectation for promotion to higher ranks.”
- “New hires may apply for, and can obtain, an UNIC Seed-grant.”

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

We would like to thank the EEC for rating this evaluation topic with 5 out of 5 in all assessment criteria without including any additional recommendations.

6. Research

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“Despite the considerable teaching load, the faculty members are all active researchers in their fields. They are also active in their research communities through serving on editorial boards, organising workshops, and participating in various program/organising/advisory committees at the national and European levels. “*
- *“The faculty members are moderately successful in attracting European funding.”*
- *“The faculty members published jointly with MSc and BSc students at UNIC.”*
- *“The department participates in the outreach activities and contributes to Open Science.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

6.1 *“The EEC encourages the Department to develop their research mission and vision — and a strategy for achieving them.”*

Response/Action:

As noted in our response to point 1.2, the Department has already articulated its strategic vision and goals — including those specific to research — in the documentation submitted for review. These include clearly defined strategic pillars, with associated goals, initiatives, and success factors, as well as a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that provide measurable targets for research output, collaboration, and impact.

6.2 *“The EEC encourages faculty members to engage stronger in research collaborations with industry, including co-publications with industrial partners and bring this research collaboration more actively into education.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the importance of research collaborations with industry and our Department faculty have a long list of such collaborations as shown in section D. 6 of the form submitted for review. These collaboration lead to joint research proposals/projects and a number of joint publications. In addition, our Department employs Adjunct Faculty that are industry researchers for teaching specialized major electives courses, exposing student to their research and utilizing real-datasets. In addition, the Department host a number of research seminars throughout the year, from the industry. These events help students understand how research is translated into real-world applications and encourage networking and engagement with the professional community.

We remain committed to further strengthening these research collaborations with industry even further, taking advantage of the Department’s recent expansion to Athens, which offers new

opportunities for partnerships with local and regional industry leaders. This includes plans to engage industry partners in Athens through collaborative research projects, student internships, co-supervision of theses, and participation in specialized seminars and advisory input.

6.3 “The EEC encourages a stronger reflection on the alignment between research policy and recruitment policy. This can help to increase synergies between research and teaching.”

Response/Action:

We agree with the EEC for the importance of aligning research and recruitment policies. Our recruitment plans prioritize hiring faculty in key research areas aligned with our strategic agenda. This approach helps to create strong synergies between research and teaching, supporting both the department’s core focus and its broader academic mission.

6.4 “The EEC encourages the Department to develop a strategy for helping students to acquire research skills.”

Response/Action:

We would like to note that our students are involved in research. Besides our graduate level programs where research is a fundamental aim of the programs and have specific courses on research skills such as the course Research Seminars and Methodology, we also engage our undergraduate level students to research in multiple ways: through project courses as early as year 2, as well as in the Final Year project which is in their senior year. Some of these projects resulted co-authored publications in refereed conference proceeding with the student and supervisor. It should be noted that at least 10 such publications in the last 5 years where co-authored with undergraduate students. We also host a seminar series each semester (Fall and Spring) where all our students are encouraged to attend, including the undergraduates. In addition to what we have already been practicing, we have now added formal training in data science research methods as a learning objective of COMP-248: Project in Data Science and the year-long Final Year Project I and II in both undergraduate programs. It is also important to note that some undergraduate students are invited to participate in research project before they even graduate.

6.5 “The EEC encourages the Department to stimulate top quality research and targeting A/A* ranked venues in computer science and data science and/or venues with higher visibility in application domains for its dissemination.”

Response/Action:

We appreciate the suggestion by the EEC. We actively encourage faculty to publish in A/A* ranked conferences and journals in computer science and data science, as well as in high-visibility venues within relevant application domains. This focus is being supported through mentoring initiatives, internal peer review, and recognition of high-quality publications, for

example through the Research Recognition Award established by the University, and given to full-time and adjunct faculty publishing in top fora.

6.6 *“The EEC encourages to establish PhD-TA program and/or internal funding of the research activities such that faculty members have more time and support for research, establishing research collaboration nationally and internationally with other faculty and with industry. In a longer term this should become self-sustained through project development and attracting funding.”*

Response/Action:

The University already provides such a program. The description of the PhD-TA program is detailed in Chapter 12.25 of the university regulations (attached). In brief, doctoral students who have completed the University’s pedagogical training sessions for TA can apply for a teaching assistantship that covers, among others, student mentorship, coursework grading, and lab assistance and tutorial preparation. TAs are closely supervised by the doctoral student’s advisor. TAs are important in both preparing the doctoral student for future academic duties but also for reducing faculty workload.

6.7 *“The EEC encourages to establish support for enabling visiting researchers (both incoming and outgoing).”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC’s recommendation to enhance support for visiting researchers, both incoming and outgoing. The Department actively promotes academic mobility as a means of international research collaboration, professional development, and knowledge transfer, while strengthening the department’s global networks and academic visibility. We currently make use of the Erasmus+ programme to support faculty exchanges and visiting research stays, and we are committed to expanding these efforts. The University has a dedicated administrative office (the Erasmus office) which is responsible for promoting and supporting mobility (both faculty and staff). In the last 2 years we hosted 5 visiting faculty (inc.upcoming Fall 2025), and we had 3 outgoing faculty visits on the last year.

7. Resources

This indicator was assessed with the top rating “compliant”

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

None reported.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Positive comments made by the EEC:

- *“The Department is successful, in as much as that it produces science of a high quality, publishes in good conferences and journals, is able to attract competitive research funding, and that the programmes it delivers which the EEC was tasked to evaluate, produces highly employable graduates.”*
- *“The department is efficiently and competently run by its Head, who impressed the EEC by her ability to produce constructive and comprehensive responses to the previous EEC report from the onsite visit to UNIC-Athens just one month prior to this site visit.”*
- *“In particular, the EEC recognise that any problem areas identified in the EEC reports for UNIC-Athens have been addressed: satisfactory procedures put in place, programmes updated, etc.”*
- *“Specifically for the BSc in Computer Science, for which the EEC submitted a report as part of the UNIC-Athens visit on May 31, 2025, the EEC notes that the programme was updated as it recommended: new courses were introduced, other courses repositioned, as part of an effort to update the programme. **The EEC fully approves of these updates to the programme — and appreciated the long and detailed discussions during the onsite visit of the individual courses.**”*
- *“The EEC has a positive impression about the Department: an efficient and dynamic Head, a group of strongly motivated and dynamic faculty members with a healthy seniority pyramid, and an appetite for facing the challenges that lie ahead.”*
- *“In view of this appetite for challenges, while the most immediate certainly is the UNIC-Athens extension of the Department, the EEC would like to throw another major challenge at the Department for the 5-year period to follow: to bring the Doctoral programme up to the strength that their Department merits.”*
- *“The EEC finds that the programme (through the central University rules) has robust procedures and policies in place — and that the Department is implementing them competently and rigorously: meetings and plans are documented, processes are in place for tracking progress, there are adequate safeguards in place, etc.”*
- *“The EEC also finds that the Doctoral programme produces graduates with comparable qualities to elsewhere in Europe — graduates who are satisfied with their experiences as PhD students at the Department.”*

Areas of improvement and recommendations made by EEC:

B.1. *“While the BSc is shaping up (and the department deserves to be commended for their reactivity and agility), these discussions permitted confirming a couple of courses where there still was room for modernisation, and some “thematic areas” where there still is room for evolution. The EEC will, in the programmatic report, provide detailed recommendations.”*

Response/Action:

We appreciate the EEC’s acknowledgment of our commitment in improving our programs by adopting the EEC recommendations of the Athens visit. The recommendations for further improvement are addressed in the programmatic response of the BSc CS.

B.2. *“While the EEC thus finds the Doctoral programme to be qualitatively satisfactory, it also finds that there is a significant unrealised potential: the number of current PhD students is significantly inferior to what it should be, both given the number of faculty members of the Department, and the needs of society.”*

Response/Action:

We fully agree with the EEC that there is significant potential in increasing the number of PhD students, considering the number of faculty and the needs of society. We appreciate the EEC recommendations on strategies for recruiting more PhD students, and have addressed all these recommendations in the programmatic response of the PhD programme in sections 1.1-1.8

B.3 *“The EEC would like to impress on the faculty members of the Department the value (both as a scientific collaborator, and as a Teaching Assistants to support teaching of their courses) of competent PhD students, and believes that the Department should consent a concentrated effort in producing a multi-year strategy for developing and growing its Doctoral programme, and its recognition both internally among BSc/MSc students at UNIC, and externally.”*

Response/Action:

We acknowledge the EEC’s concluding remark, which reiterates the importance of growing and strengthening the Department’s doctoral programme. We fully agree on the value of competent PhD students as both research collaborators and teaching assistants. Our multi-year strategy to expand our PhD program, and to enhance its internal and external visibility, have been outlined in the programmatic response to the PhD program (sections 1-3), which is attached with this response.

Once more, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its professional and diligent approach in providing constructive feedback and recommendations aimed at further improving our Department and its programs.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Athena Stassopoulou	Professor and Head of Computer Science Department	
Dimitris Drikakis	Professor and Dean of the School of Sciences and Engineering	

Date: 07/07/2025

